

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 10, 2026
Pastor Jasper Sellnow



Theme: An Advocate for the inadequate.

Text: John 14:15-21

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

The Word of God we'll consider today is the Gospel from John chapter 14. We pray:

Lord Jesus, uphold me, that I may uplift Thee. Amen.

Whether or not it's fair, “counseling” often has a bad connotation to it. Think about it... if you are married would you find it easy or difficult to say, “Pastor, we need marriage counseling.” Or forget being married... how many of you would be comfortable coming to me saying, “Pastor, I need counseling.”?

Deep down, I think we know, and I hope you know, that counseling is actually a good thing. And I do hope you realize that your pastors are ready and willing to be there for you to offer godly counsel at a moment's notice. We don't even have to call it “counseling” if that makes it easier! Talking with a fellow Christian and maybe especially a pastor or other trained Christian counselor can be a tremendous blessing to you individually or in your relationships. In fact, we're told in the Bible in the book of Proverbs that **“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.” Proverbs 15:22**

But even if we know that seeking counsel is a good thing most of us still struggle to seek it out. Why is that? Well, could it be perhaps that asking for counsel means admitting our own inadequacies... our own shortcomings, mistakes, failures?

I bring this up because today's Gospel reading takes us to John 14 where we hear Jesus to give us the counsel that we need saying, **“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.”** The Greek word – Paraclete – that is translated here as “advocate” is one Pastor Jacobson talked about in one of his recent sermons. This Greek word literally means “to call alongside” – and the picture is that of a person coming up to you and walking alongside of you. They can be there to offer comfort, counsel, encouragement, support, and guidance. English Bibles will often translate this term as *Counselor*, *Comforter*, or as we have in our Bible today *Advocate*.

And this is what Jesus calls God the Holy Spirit. He is our Counselor – our Comforter – Our Advocate. And that doesn't sound so bad, does it? And yet just like we bristle at people doing this for us, we might do the same with the Advocate that the Father and Son send us in God the Holy Spirit. Why? Well, because when we need counsel, when we need comfort, when we need an advocate – it reveals that we are people who need help... people who can't defend themselves... people who are broken and need fixing. The existence of the Holy Spirit – as Jesus describes him here – reveals our inadequacy.

But it's not just the fact that we need the Spirit that reveals this. Everything else Jesus said demonstrates this clearly too. Remember how Jesus began this section? **"If you love me, keep my commands."** And Jesus had just spoken about his commands right at the end of the previous chapter of John's Gospel saying, **"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."** **John 13:34**

We don't really need to go much further to reveal our inadequacy, do we? The disciples weren't capable of perfectly obeying Jesus' command to love one another as he had loved them. I also am incapable of perfectly obeying that command. So are you. And if you do go further... if you need proof, you can look at the specific commands God lays out for us throughout his Word that show us what this kind of love is meant to look like. Consider some of God's Word spoken through St. Peter in our second reading today: **In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.** **1 Peter 3:15**

Do you always set apart Jesus in your heart as Lord, or do you find yourself revering and honoring other people or things instead? Is time spent in God's Word your joy and delight or a chore to be done, often begrudgingly? Are you prepared to tell others about the hope you have in Jesus? The hope you have of heaven? The certain hope of forgiveness that is fulfilled daily by your gracious God? Or do you spend so little time in Word and prayer that you are caught off guard when opportunities come to share Jesus with those who need him? Or do you find yourself using the Bible as a club and treating people not with gentleness and respect in your witness, but with scorn and contempt?

Yes, Jesus calls on us to obey him, to love him, to show that love in our witness to others just like Paul did in Athens, and Peter did in his letters. But on our own we are incapable of that kind of obedience and love.

And that kind of knowledge can lead to fear... fear that Jesus will one day get sick of us like we get sick of people in our lives who constantly let us down. But that's not how Jesus operates. He loves us like a mother loves her child. Better in fact – he loves us unconditionally. Because he not only is perfect but has the perfect power to give you exactly what you need to forgive your sins and motivate your love and prompt your obedience. The Lord Jesus who lives forever sends the Spirit so you have a Counselor for your problems, a Comforter for your pain – an Advocate for the inadequate – One who will walk along side of you in Word and Sacrament and never leave or forsake you. Remember what Jesus said in our text: **I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.**

This is what God the Holy Spirit does for us. He comes from the risen Savior to point us back to that same risen Savior. He gives us life in Jesus as he counsels us with the gospel. Filling us with hope for our marriages and families. He gives us life in Jesus as he comforts us with the gospel. Assuring us of our place in God's family because of our baptism and granting us perfect pardon in the body and blood of the Lamb given under the bread and wine. He gives us life in Jesus as he advocates for us in all our inadequacies... defending us from our failure by pointing us to Christ's victory at the cross and empty tomb... speaking up for us when others would write us off... when our own hearts would condemn us.

And what results from such an Advocate for us, the inadequate? We see our inadequacy met by perfect love that stirs us to love like Jesus, speak like Jesus, live like Jesus. And it becomes not a vicious cycle, but a beautiful one in which the love of God is poured out on us by the Father and Son through the Spirit. And we in turn overflow with that love in our own lives, giving evidence to the grace of God in our lives, and witnessing to that grace of God as others witness our love in action. Jesus put it perfectly in the closing words of our sermon text: **Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who**

loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love them and show myself to them.

And as Jesus shows himself to us more and more, we see his love more and more and then reflect it more and more.

Live in Jesus... live in that beautiful cycle brothers and sisters... let the life of Jesus and the love of Jesus flow through you. And when you need help... when you feel totally inadequate... don't look down your nose at counseling... especially when it comes from *The Counselor – The Comforter – The Advocate himself*. Jesus lives! And he gives the perfect Advocate for the inadequate. Rely on Him and rest in Him. He will keep bringing you back to Jesus so you can remain in his love and live it, until that day when he brings you home to the perfect unity we'll experience with our God forever. Amen.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Jude 24-25